

Of Dreams and Headcrabs

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Summary: Follow Alyx, Barney, and Gordon as they go through a normal day. Expect anything but normality. The eight chapter is up. Alyx warns her dad about the headcrab threat! Bad news, I currently have writer's block. Next update...who knows. Sorry.

1. Of Dreams and Crowbars

Of Dreams and Headcrabs

_In case you were here before, this story was formerly titled Following Gordon. I changed the name since, well, I decided it didn't really fit and sounded too much like the title of another story, by another author titled Follow Freeman! I also changed the ending of this section slightly to make it fit better with what I'm now doing with the story. _

_I apologize for the mess, but I wrote the first chapter before I realized that choose-your-own-adventure stories weren't allowed. As such, I'm trying to figure out what to do. Granted, I should have decided this before postingâ€¦but it's too late now. Well, I have now decided. This story will basically be the second plotline I had planned from the choose-your-own-adventure story, set sometime during Half-life 2. Since I don't like to write long chapters, I suppose you could consider this story a bunch of connected drabbles. _

****Chapter 1: Of Dreams and Crowbars****

Gordon Freeman rarely remembered his dreams and for the longest time, until the solution to the physics equation he was having trouble with came to him in a dream, he thought that he didn't dream. Perhaps, most of his dreams were ordinary, so he forgot them when he woke up. Or perhaps, he was so busy when he woke up that he didn't have time to remember them. In any case, most of the time Gordon didn't think about his dreams.

But this dream was different.

In this dream, he was at his college, the one he went to before he got hired at Black Mesa. He was in the lab, despite the fact that he actually spent very little time in a lab. Some one was talking to him, but he couldn't tell who. Their words were vague; he couldn't understand what was being said. He looked around for the speaker, and then knew that even though this was his college laboratory, he was in Black Mesa. An alarm sounded, and the people around him, whom Gordon hadn't even noticed until they started moving, headed towards the far door. He placed his hand on the shoulder of the nearest person to ask them what was happening and they turned to face him andâ€

He was in a city. Seattle to be exact, his hometown. But it wasn't the Seattle of his memory. It was broken, buildings were starting to fall down, and trash was everywhere. Rusty cars lined the streets, missing wheels and doors. Behind him, he knew would be the Space Needle, but if he turned to look he knew something else would be there. Something that didn't belong. He wanted to look, but at the same time feared what he might see.

Looking up, he noticed a very large box. It was made of wood, but looked sturdy and out of place in the desolate street. It was then he realized that he was holding a crowbar. He took a step towards the box and stopped when he saw the figure standing on the box. It was a pale man, wearing an immaculate suit holding a suitcase.

"Open the box, Missster Free..man. I think you willâ€|likeâ€|what is inssside," he said.

The sight of the man filled with Gordon with rage, he wanted to smash his face in. He raised his crowbar, and suddenly the man was Barney.

"Hey, whatcha waiting for? I want to see what's inside. Open it."

"But I might hit you," Gordon replied.

Barney smiled and jumped off, transforming into a small dog. He ran off around a corner.

"Barney, wait, don't go. You won't be able to see what is in the box," Gordon called out.

He wanted to wait for Barney to come back, but he felt the crowbar grow heavy in his hands and he knew that if he waited much longer he wouldn't be able to lift the crowbar enough to hit the box. It was so heavy, but he managed to lift it enough to gently tap the crate. At the touch of the crowbar, the crate collapsed, displaying the contents inside, his HEV suit.

He didn't puzzle over why his suit was in the box. He couldn't explain it, but it made sense. And Gordon knew he had to touch it to put it on or something bad would happen. He hesitated, looking his suit over. Then he reached out and touched it.

2. Of Dreams and Lamarr

_I have to admit, this is the chapter that made me decide to go with

the Half-Life 2 timeline. While I had the Half-Life timeline loosely outlined, I actually wrote up this chapter. It amuses me way too much to not post, and unlike the past timeline, it actually has something to do with the dream other than Gordon waking up from the dream.

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_I apologize for the shortness of the chapters, but I'm more comfortable writing a bunch of short chapters rather than one long one. _

****Chapter 2: Of Dreams and Lamarr****

"And then, I woke up."

Alyx shook her head. "Gordon, you have the strangest dreams. What do you think it meant? I think it means you need to stop sleeping with your crowbar."

Gordon shrugged.

"That's nothing," boasted Barney. "One time, I dreamed that I was president of the United States and my vice president was Lamarr. And together, we fought crime, drank beer and, uh," Barney hesitated.

"What, what?" Alyx asked. "Don't leave us hanging."

"And we had sex."

Gordon arched his eyebrow and leaned back in his chair slightly, away from Barney. After staring at Barney for a few seconds, Alyx burst out laughing uncontrollably and fell out of her chair. She lay on the floor, unable to breathe, tears in her eyes.

"Youâ€¦andâ€¦Lamarrâ€¦had sex," She managed to gasp out.

"What? Woah! No!" Barney blushed furiously. "That's not what I meant. I didn't mean to each other. To women. Not each other. No. Oh, God no."

"Headcrabs reproduce by making humans zombies." Gordon mused. "Did you dream of being a zombie?"

"NO!" Barney yelled.

"Then she had copulated with you like a human?" Gordon asked.

"No! You aren't listening to me. Lamarr. And. I. Did. Not. Have. Sex. I mean, I didn't really think about what exactly Lamarr was doing, I just knew that she was having doing it with someone. Someone other than me. You know, cause it was a dream. I didn't think about how Lamarr did it. It didn't matter. All I know is that there were these two hot girls. One for me, and one for her. Cause I was president and saved their lives or something."

"I see." Gordon said. He stared over at the far wall, deep in thought. "So, did Lamarr transform someone into a zombie thenâ€¦"

"I don't know," Barney interrupted. "I. Do. Not. Know. And I don't care. Just pretend I didn't say anything."

"Very well." Gordon sighed. "But it would be interesting to consider the possibilities."

"No. No it wouldn't." Barney glared at Gordon.

Alyx, who had finally recovered enough to stand up on her own, snickered. "Don't worry Barney, I believe you. Not. I am so telling Dr. Kleiner about your improper feelings towards Lamarr."

"No. No. No. No." Barney stood up and placed his hands on Alyx's shoulders. Visibly pale he pleaded, "No, you can't. That's not what I meant and you know it."

Gently prying Barney's hands off of her, Alyx sighed. "Well, alright. I won't tell him. But you owe me."

Barney fell back into his chair and looked over wearily at Gordon before burying his face in his arms on the table. He groaned softly. "Why me?" Came his muffled voice.

Alyx grinned impishly and moved over to poke Barney but stopped mid-action when Gordon spoke.

"Don't you have work to do?"

Alyx gasped. "You're right. I do. Oh no. I forgot. Dr. Kleiner and my dad are going to kill me. Shame on you Gordon, you made me late. As punishment, you have to help me. You too Barney."

Barney looked up at Alyx. "What? What's going on?"

"Help me. In payment I won't tell anyone about the conversation we just had."

"Fine." Barney sighed wearily. "What do we have to do?"

3. Of Crowbars and HEV suits

I have decided on making an update schedule, that way I will update consistently. I should post a chapter sometime every Tuesday and Friday unless I forget.

****Chapter 3: Of Crowbars and HEV suits****

Alyx ignored Barney's question completely, and instead focused on Gordon. She poked him on the arm and said, "Hey, you look good. Don't think I've seen you outside of your HEV suit before."

Gordon looked down at his bare arm. He was wearing jeans and a white button down shirt that Barney had given him. However, the shirt was a little loose and the jeans didn't fit nearly as well as he liked. Plus, they smelled even worse than Barney claimed his HEV suit did. The only good things about them were that people didn't gawk at him nearly as much, and he could leave the base with out everyone instantly recognizing him.

"No, you have," he said.

"Really? I don't remember. When was it?"

"You were small," Gordon said. He gestured with his hand about waist height to show how small she was.

"Wow, you knew me before the Black Mesa incident?" she exclaimed.

Gordon nodded. "A little, I mostly knew your father."

"I keep on forgetting that. You don't look much older than me, you know."

"As fascinating as this is," Barney interjected, "I'd much rather know what job you are going to drag me into."

Alyx smirked. "You will never guess."

"Yeah, yeah, just tell me and get it over with." Barney grumbled.

"Our task for today is to take care of your lover, Lamarr."

Barney groaned and turned away from Alyx. "I'm never going to live that down, am I?"

"Nope," Alyx said, grinning wickedly.

"Do all three of us have to do it? Couldn't just, uh, you and Gordon take care of her?" Barney complained.

"I'm not going to do it alone, not when I have other people to baby-sit her for me. I suppose I could have had just Gordon take care of her, but I don't trust him to keep her alive, so I'd need someone to stop him from killing her. No offence, Gordon."

Gordon didn't say a word, but Alyx thought she saw a slight smile touch his lips.

"And we can't leave her alone with you, who knows what you'd do to the poor thing," Alyx said.

Barney glared wordlessly at Alyx.

Alyx grinned widely then continued, "I don't think I'm strong enough to stop you from having your way with her, so I need Gordon with me. So, I need you both here. To counter each other."

"Great," Barney sighed. "Just great. Where is Lamarr anyway?"

"I don't know. Hopefully with Dr. Kleiner, if not then we will have to hunt for her."

Gordon looked at Alyx thoughtfully then abruptly stood up for the table they were all sitting at and headed out of the room.

"Gordon, where are you going?" Alyx asked.

"Room," he called back, "need crowbar."

"What? No you don't. Come back here!" Alyx exclaimed.

Looking far happier than he had earlier, Barney said gleefully, "I wonder if he thought you means hunt as in kill instead of search."

"Oh he better not have," she replied to Barney. "Gordon, you can't kill Lamarr!" she yelled, even though Gordon was by that time far enough away that he probably didn't hear her.

A smile touched Barney's lips. "I can't say I'd be too upset to see her dead. Then I'd never have to baby sit her again. You know, I do have far more important things to do than babysitting a freakin' headhumper."

"But you promised, and I need you to help with Gordon," Alyx pouted.

"Yeah, yeah. Lucky for you I don't have anything more important to do right this moment. Let's find Lamarr before Dr. Kleiner does something stupid like let her climb into the air vents. Gordon can catch up to us." Barney stood up and left the small room that the resistance used as their all purpose, ready room, cafeteria, lounge, and living room and headed down the hall towards Kleiner's lab.

Catching up to him, Alyx looked around nervously. "You know, the sleeping quarters aren't that far away. It shouldn't take him this long to find his crowbar and get back to us."

"Eh, he's probably getting into his HEV suit," Barney said unconcerned.

Alyx stopped walking and stared intensely at Barney's back. "To baby sit Lamarr," she said slowly.

"Yeah."

Alyx's expression was unreadable. Quietly she said, "He needs his suit. To baby sit." She took a deep breath and practically screamed, "Lamarr?"

Barney shrugged unperturbed by his companion's outburst. "Sure, can't hurt to be prepared. I'd suit up too, but all I have is the CP uniform, and I'm not too confident in the new recruits' abilities to tell friend from foe."

"You know," Alyx said quietly, "Gordon could be considered a new recruit."

Barney stopped and looked around cautiously, looking for someone who wasn't there. "I stand by what I said." Barney looked away not meeting Alyx's eyes, "He's armed, and he has VERY good reflexes."

4. Of Crowbars and Shotguns

_I've re-read the last few chapters and noticed that while I have a lot of dialogue, I really haven't been describing things that well, so this chapter has a little bit more description. It's still not

enough to make me happy, but the next chapter will have even more.

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_Heeeeâ€|I've been playing HL2 again. I'm a horrible driver, but the gravity gun is fun. I need to figure out how to stick that in the story somewhere. _

****Chapter 4: Of Crowbars and Shotguns****

It didn't take Barney and Alyx long to reach Dr. Kleiner's lab. From outside they could hear Dr. Kleiner and Dr. Vance talking heatedly. Obviously, they had started whatever it was that they had been planning on doing before Alyx had gotten there to pick up Lamarr. Although, from the sound of things, it was likely that something had went wrong. Perhaps Dr. Kleiner had gotten his equations wrong again. Or, more likely, Lamarr had gotten into something she shouldn't have.

Cautiously, Alyx opened the lab door, trying not to disturb the occupants. She quietly motioned to Barney to remain quiet. If she got in and out without disturbing them, perhaps neither one would notice that she had been late in picking up Lamarr. She was in luck, as neither one turned around as the door opened; instead, they remained focused on the large blackboard they stood in front, arguing over the equation that covered its surface. Idly, she noted that it had something to do with the teleportation device, but that wasn't important right now so she ignored it. Though, she did have to wonder why Gordon wasn't involved in the meeting. Teleportation was one of the things he worked on at Black Mesa, wasn't it? It was something she'd have to ask Gordon later.

The lab itself was a mess. As usual. Papers were strewn everywhere; on the tables, chairs, and there were even piles of papers in the corners. The only place that was even remotely tidy was the large crate that normally held Lamarr. The door to the crate was ominously ajar and Barney reluctantly looked inside fearing the worst.

Barney sighed rather loudly. Dr. Kleiner visibly jumped in surprise, while Eli Vance was able to hide his surprise and said, "Ah, Barney. I wasn't expecting you here."

"I wasn't expecting me here either, but your daughter roped me into babysitting Lamarr. Speaking of which, where is the headhumper?"

Dr. Kleiner shrugged. "I think she's around here somewhere. She was getting lonely in her crate, so I let her out for some fresh air. I don't know where she could have gotten to."

Barney shook his head. This was exactly what he had been afraid would happen. He had even said so earlier. He glared at Alyx, knowing that she was going to make him find Lamarr.

"I don't suppose she's still in the lab?" Alyx asked hopefully.

Barney pointed up to the uncovered air vent above him. "Considering that we never got around to fixing that, I doubt it."

"Barney may be right," Dr. Kleiner said. "I have seen her in a while, so she's probably is hiding in the vents. Sorry Alyx."

"That's ok. We'll go look for her." Alyx grabbed Barney's arm and pulled him towards the door. "Come on, let's go find Gordon then we can all search for Lamarr."

Outside of Kleiner's lab, with the door firmly closed, Barney complained, "I can't believe it, we're 10 minutes late and he has lost his stupid pet."

Alyx started to reply, but stopped when she heard the sound of footsteps echoing down the hall. Very familiar footsteps. It was the footsteps of someone walking at a leisurely pace wearing heavy boots. Boots that someone shouldn't be wearing. She looked up to see Gordon round the corner in his right hand was his customary crowbar, and he was wearing his HEV suit. Alyx blinked, hoping that she had been seeing things, but when she looked back, it was unmistakable. The suit was the distinctive black and orange partly metal armor, with the lambda logo prominently placed on the chest. There was nothing else it could be.

Placing her hands on her hips, she glared at Gordon. "What are you wearing?"

Gordon merely looked back at her questioningly. "My HEV suit." He replied sounding slightly puzzled.

"I know that. Why?"

Before Gordon could answer, Barney interrupted and said, "Hey Gordon, good to see you again. I was beginning to think you might have abandoned me to her mercies." Barney tilted his head over towards Alyx. "Well, Dr. Kleiner lost Lamarr again, so we'll be hunting for her."

"Searching." Alyx corrected. "We will be searching for Lamarr. There will be no hunting going on here. And I want you both to promise me you won't harm her."

"Fine," Barney said, "I don't see what the big deal is."

"Gordon?" Alyx asked.

Gordon merely looked at Alyx, his expression unreadable.

"Promise me you won't do anything to hurt Lamarr."

Gordon merely shrugged. The movement caused the weapon that was slung over his shoulder to jostle and grate against his armor. The sound distracted Alyx and then she finally noticed that Gordon was carrying a weapon along with the worn red crowbar.

"Gordon," she said slowly, "Is that a shotgun?"

Sliding the aforementioned weapon off his shoulder, he looked down at it as it rested comfortably in his hands. He nodded affirmative then looked up at Alyx questioningly.

"I can almost understand the crowbar and suit. Almost. But why do you need a shotgun to baby sit Lamarr?"

Gordon pondered her question for a few moments before simply saying, "Just in case the combine attack."

"I see," Alyx said her tone indicating she didn't understand at all. "And the crowbar and suit weren't enough?"

"No."

"Why stop there? Why not bring the combine rifle, your pistol, the machine gun, or even the rocket launcher?"

Looking over at Barney for help, but receiving nothing but a smirk, Gordon sighed and said, "Don't need them to baby sit Lamarr."

"But. You. Shotgun. Lamarr. Argh. I don't understand men."

At that, Barney couldn't help himself, and he burst out laughing. Alyx glared at Barney and prepared to tell him to stop laughing, when a loud thump coming from the mental air ducts above them interrupted her, preventing or at least stalling Alyx's mental breakdown.

Barney stopped laughing and looked up. "You think that's Lamarr?" Barney asked.

"Who else would it be?" Alyx snapped. "Let's go find her. What's the quickest way to get to her?"

After a few seconds consideration, Gordon headed down the hall away from Dr. Kleiner's lab. Barney looked at Alyx who shrugged and shooed Barney away. "I'll stay here and track her movement. You go help Gordon." she said.

Barney glared at Alyx for a couple of seconds before saying, "Making us do all your work, I see."

Alyx smiled innocently at him. "Maybe," she said.

5. Of Shotguns and Headcrabs

Blehâ€¦soâ€¦tired. I both like and hate this chapter. I'm not sure how much longer this story will go on for. I have a couple more chapters planned out, but not sure where I'll go from there. I'll either think of something or write a different Half Life story. I did have some ideas for one set before the Resonance Cascade. I guess we will see.

_I blame the new Phoenix Wright game. Curse you Phoenix! Curse you for stealing my imagination and stealing it away from Gordon where it belongs. sigh Obviously, I need to play Half-Life 2 some more for inspiration. _

Chapter 5: Of Shotguns and Headcrabs

By the time Barney reached Gordon, Gordon had found an entrance to the ventilation system and was studying the grating covering the air duct. It was one of the few openings that was near the ground, in easy reach of any MIT graduates who wished to crawl through them.

Barney said, "Ah, air vents. This brings me back to the old Black Mesa. I miss those days." He paused. "Then again, I only really crawled in the damn vents after the Resonance Cascade. Who am I kidding, I hate air vents. Its all yours Gordon, don't wait up for me."

Gordon grunted noncommittally and continued to study the air vent that was unfortunately covered by a metal grating. He tapped it experimentally with his crowbar; it was also firmly in place.

"You know, you probably shouldn't break that. It's kinda hard to replace those covers these days and I know that Alyx would make us replace it if we broke it. We'd probably end up breaking into the citadel and stealing one of the combine's vent covers or something," Barney said.

Gordon stared at Barney blankly for a few seconds, considering if that was actually a bad thing or not. Perhaps he should break the grating.

Barney asked, "You don't happen to have a screwdriver in that suit of yours, do you?"

Gordon said solemnly, "No. No pockets."

"Ah, right. You know, I tried to convince Dr. Kleiner to put pockets in the suit when he was redesigning it, but he didn't listen to me."

Gordon was beginning to wonder why exactly Barney was bothering him. At first Gordon had thought that maybe Barney had come to help, but now he was seriously doubting that. It was getting rather annoying, Barney just wouldn't shut up. This was why Gordon liked working alone, it gave him time to think things through without someone asking inane questions or making idle conversation. He had never been very good at small talk. To him, if he didn't have anything to say, he wouldn't say anything at all.

Pulling gently on the grate, Gordon tested to see if maybe the grate wasn't firmly attached to the wall as he initially thought it was. If it wasn't screwed in well, he could take it off without doing too much damage. To his disappointment, it was firmly attached. These things never were that simple. As he pondered the possibility of using his crowbar as a makeshift screwdriver, Barney waved an object in his face.

"Yo, Gordon, you kinda zoned out on me there."

Focusing on the object, Gordon saw that it was a screwdriver. Wordlessly, he grabbed the screwdriver out of Barney's hands, and proceeded to unscrew the screws holding the grate into the wall."

"Not even a thanks, huh?" Barney sighed and shook his head. "You should be happy I had the foresight to um, borrow, it from Dr. Kleiner when Alyx and I were in his lab."

Ignoring Barney, Gordon focused on the task at hand. It would have been much easier to use his crowbar, just two swift hits and the grate would have been gone, but he had to admit, this would lead to

less work in the end. But destroying the grate certainly would have been more fun. There was something to be said about the thrill of destroying someone else's property. Maybe later he'd be able to find an empty crate somewhere that someone wanted destroyed. Or maybe even a full one someone didn't want destroyed. He wasn't too particular.

Now that he had removed the grate, it was time for the fun part, crawling through the vents. Gordon returned the screwdriver to Barney, as he shouldn't need it anymore. These ducts appeared to be smaller than ones he was used to, it would be quite the tight squeeze, but it would still be large enough for him to fit in without getting stuck. Hopefully. Since he might need both hands to capture the headcrab, if that was indeed the sound they had heard, he would need to have his hands free. Reluctantly, Gordon placed his crowbar on the ground in front of the vent. He'd have to get it later when he came back. The shotgun should be out of the way on his back.

It occurred to Gordon as he entered the tight space that these large air ducts were quite impractical, seeing as they could allow small animals, headcrabs, and even humans in. He'd have to bring it up sometime.

After crawling forwards a few paces, Gordon reached the ladder that would bring him up to the ceiling where they had last heard the suspicious noise. He slowly climbed the ladder, the shotgun on his back clanked loudly against the wall behind him and he began to wonder if perhaps he should have brought the crowbar instead. Once he reached the top, he realized that the next area was too small for him to move through with the shotgun over his shoulder, so he removed it and started to crawl forwards by pushing the unwieldy weapon ahead of him.

He definitely should have brought the crowbar instead.

* * *

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Barney could hear Gordon noisily maneuver around in the air ducts and was glad he wasn't the one in there. Those tight air ducts always made him feel claustrophobic. Plus, he didn't have a flashlight, and the thought of Lamarr jumping out at him in the dark was not something he wanted to think about.

Noticing the crowbar that Gordon left behind, Barney picked it up. It was his crowbar first so Gordon couldn't complain. It was odd though, Gordon didn't like leaving the crowbar behind. "Huh, I guess he decided he didn't need it after all. I bet he just got it to mess with Alyx. It's probably some weird way of his of saying he didn't want to help baby-sit Lamarr or something."

After a few minutes of waiting, Barney sighed loudly. Now that he was alone, he didn't have anyone to talk to. He wished Gordon would hurry up. Sure, Gordon didn't talk much, but he was a great listener. He never complained no matter what Barney said. Barney was about to yell to Gordon to hurry up when a shotgun blast echoed loudly through the ventilation ducts.

It took Barney a few seconds to register what he heard. "What theâ€¦!"

he said, his voice trailing off. Then the impact of what he heard dawned on him. "Shit! Gordon! You aren't supposed to shoot Lamarr!" He yelled.

Alyx was going to be pissed.

6. Of Alyx and Lamaar

_Noooooâ€|I'm running out of different ways to say of something and something. Hmm, maybe I'll actually have to start thinking about the title then. Butâ€|but, it will ruin my 'thing'. _

Also, my new wallpaper with Gordon on it doesn't seem to be inspiring me to write more. Booooooâ€|Well, I really can't see this story going much longer than a couple more weeks. So, I'll stick it out until then. Then maybe I'll write the other Half-Life story I was planning on writing sometime!

I would also like to thank everyone who has reviewed my story so far, you guys give me a reason to update. Andâ€|why do I keep on spelling headcrab headcarb, it is getting very annoying.

Chapter 6: Of Alyx and Lamarr

Alyx was beyond pissed. She was so furious that it scared Barney, and he had lived through the Black Mesa incident. He had forgotten what it felt like to be terrified; to be truly terrified, not the continuous dull terror that he had gotten used to. This was fresh, and a little exciting. But one thing was for certain, he was glad that her anger wasn't focused on him. If it weren't that Gordon probably deserved it, he'd feel sorry for him.

As she ran up to Barney, Alyx demanded, "Barney, why did I hear a shotgun?"

Alyx glared at Barney who wished Gordon would exit the air ducts a little faster so that Alyx would focus her anger where it belongs. On Gordon. It wasn't fair, Barney thought, he didn't do anything wrong. "I don't know," Barney whined, "I didn't tell him to shoot anything. It's not my fault."

Noticing the crowbar in his hands, Alyx asked, "You are able to stop him from crawling the vents with the crowbar but not the shotgun?"

Barney shuffled his feet nervously. "Well, it's not like that. I didn't exactly convince him to leave it. He kinda left it on his own."

"Why didn't you stop him?" Alyx said, placing her hands on her hips, "You should have known better."

"Hey, don't blame me. You're the one who mentioned hunting Lamarr. Anyway, you try taking a weapon away from Gordon, he's possessive of them."

Alyx started to pace anxiously. "What am I going to tell Dr. Kleiner?" she groaned. "I promised him I'd take care of Lamarr. He'll never trust me again."

"Hey, maybe it was just a large cockroach or something," Barney said, trying to be reassuring. Reassuring to whom, he wasn't sure. But if it wasn't a cockroach, that would leave Alyx in a foul mood for a long time. He was definitely ditching Gordon to Alyx the first opportunity he got.

"That would be..." Alyx paused. "I'd say that would be stupid, but considering that he brought a shotgun with him to baby-sit Lamarr I hope that's true.

Barney could hear Gordon noisily crawl closer to the entrance to the air vent. There was an odd thumping sound that he made as he crawled got louder and louder the closer he came to the entrance. Barney couldn't help but think it sounded like he was dragging something. It made his cockroach theory seem more and more implausible, unless that was one big roach.

Barney whispered to himself, "Please don't be a headcrab."

Breathlessly, Barney and Alyx waited for Gordon to emerge completely from the air vent, which he seemed to be doing particularly slowly. At first, Barney wondered why Alyx wasn't saying anything, he would have thought that she would have started her tirade the moment she saw Gordon emerge from the vent, then he realized that Gordon was crawling out backwards and Alyx was staring rather intently at Gordon's ass. Barney grinned widely; he was definitely going to bring this up later.

Gordon stood up and turned around, facing Alyx and Barney. In his right hand was his shotgun, which now that he was out of the air ducts he slung over his shoulder. In his left hand were the mangled remains of a headcrab, which he wordlessly threw on the floor.

"Youâ€|youâ€|" Alyx stammered. "You killed Lamarr!"

Gordon pushed his glasses up his nose and asked, "You sure?" He didn't sound particularly interested in her answer.

"Who else would it be?" Alyx practically screeched. She covered her face in her hands and moaned, "Great, just great."

Barney crouched over the mangled remains; there wasn't a whole lot left. There was however, enough left to say that this had been, at one time, a headcrab. He poked it a couple of times with the crowbar. Yup, it was dead. Poking it a couple more times for good measure, Barney then flipped it over so he could see the underside. The underside was remarkably intact compared to the rest of the body.

"Wait a second," he said while staring intently at the remains.

Gordon looked at Barney expressionlessly. Or, was he? Barney wasn't sure, but he thought he saw a hint of a smile touch Gordon's lips.

Alyx sighed and asked, "What is it?"

"This isn't Lamarr." Barney said, while looking over at Gordon. To his surprise, Gordon actually smiled. It wasn't a toothy grin, and some might have considered it a smirk, but it was there. Barney needed a camera. He hadn't seen Gordon smile since, well, since before the incident. And even then he didn't smile much.

Alyx was quiet for a couple of seconds, mulling over what Barney said. "What do you mean it isn't Lamarr? Of course it is, who else would it be."

"I don't know." Barney said, "but I do know it isn't Lamarr. I've seen her underside far more than I want to count, it's been emblazoned into my mind, and this isn't Lamarr's belly." He poked the edge of what would be the mouth of the headcrab with the crowbar. "See these teeth things? Lamarr doesn't have them."

"Thatâ€¦thatâ€¦.that isn't Lamarr. That meansâ€¦"

"That means we have wild headcrabs loose in our air vents," Barney said.

7. Of Scientists and Air Ducts

Hahahaha! I discovered the best thing EVER! It's plans to make all sorts of half life stuff out of paper. I already made myself a rollermine. Next I will make Gordon's Half Life 2 HEV suit. Best thing ever. Until I find the next best thing ever that is.

Anyway, wow, this story is now my most read story. Cool.

_So, this chapter was supposed to be somewhat different, Gordon was going to leave the base, instead now he's climbing in the vents again. And now you get lots and lots of Gordon's thoughts. Hopefully he isn't too out of character. _

Chapter 7: Of Scientists and Air Ducts

Gordon was unsurprised at the revelation of headcrabs in the air ducts. He had been expecting them after all. True, he wasn't expecting the one he found, he was expecting the harmless Lamarr, but a headcrab was a headcrab. Ignoring both Alyx and Barney, he started to return the grate to its original position. He briefly considered screwing it back on, but he would probably have to reenter the ventilation system soon, probably within the next couple of minutes, so he didn't bother.

Even if he had wanted to screw the grate back into the wall, he couldn't. He didn't have the screwdriver anymore. He couldn't screw in the screws without a screwdriver, which, if he remembered correctly, Barney had. Gordon narrowed his eyes; Barney also had his crowbar. And Barney was using it to poke the headcrab. That was not the proper use of a crowbar. He needed to use more force.

Gordon silently grabbed the crowbar from Barney's hands. Barney looked a little surprised then took on an expression of mock anger.

"Hey, that's mine you know. If you remember I was the one who gave it to you."

Gordon merely glared at Barney, daring him to take it back.

Sighing heavily Barney said, "Well, I suppose you can keep it a little longer. You'll probably need it."

Alyx suddenly burst out, "There's an open grate in Isaac's lab!" She then took off down the hall.

Barney blinked, puzzled at Alyx's sudden outburst. "What the hell?" He said. "Oh, that's right, there was an open vent in the lab." He took a deep breath, thinking. "Well, I guess I'll go outside and look for the point where the headcrab entered the air system. You can crawl around looking for any still inside, and um, Alyx can warn her dad."

"Great," Gordon said with a sigh. He knew it. Five minutes later and he was going back into the air ducts.

"I'd offer to take your place, but it probably wouldn't be smart to have you wander around outside in that bright orange suit. Plus I don't got a flashlight."

Nodding, Gordon removed the grate that he had just put back. Thinking it over, he probably didn't need his shotgun, it had been quite cumbersome the last time he was in these ducts. He handed his shotgun over to Barney who took it.

"Hey, thanks. Now I won't have to go to the armory for a weapon." Barney grinned and waved, and started to walk off. He called back, "Have fun!"

Gordon shook his head. He was not going to have fun. While he used to enjoy crawling through the air ducts, it wasn't nearly as fun after the five hundredth and fifty third time. What was it with the air ducts anyway? Was there some sort of force pulling him to them? He always seemed to be crawling in them. He remembered racing Barney to retrieve Dr. Kleiner's office key through the air ducts. That was fun. The only things that he had to worry about were the occasional black widow spiders. Now he had to worry about being attacked by small crawling creatures that wanted to eat his brains.

There was one good thing about these air vent crawls; he didn't have to listen to anyone talk. Even worse was when they didn't talk. It always bugged him when people would just stand there staring at him. It made him wonder if there was something on his suit. Then he would realize that it was his suit; that was what they were staring at. He knew, because he had experimented, walking around with his suit on verses walking around without it. People noticed him a lot more when he wore it.

Since he was always wearing his suit, did that mean that he actually wanted people to stare at him? That couldn't be. He wore it for protection, that's all. Most definitely not because he wanted people to stare at him. You never knew when the Combine would attack, and he just knew that the one time he didn't wear his suit he'd need it. Perhaps he'd have to convince Dr. Kleiner to make him a stealthier suit or a less cumbersome one that he could wear under his clothes.

Then again, people might start noticing him instead of his suit and then he'd never get away from their annoying stares.

As he crawled noisily through the cramped air ducts, he wondered what people thought when they heard him crawling around. While this was one of the more private ways to get from one end of the base to the other, it certainly wasn't the quietest. Not that he used air ducts to travel all that often in populated areas, but there were times he did so to avoid certain people. He'd ever admit it to anyone though. If asked, he'd claim to be inspecting the air vents for headcrabs. It was a perfectly logical reason to be in the air ducts.

But, what did people think? Did they think it was an invasion? Would some of the more trigger happy start shooting at the ceiling? He hoped not, he'd rather not get shot. While his suit could take it, the bruises could be painful. And whenever he got shot, his suit injected morphine into him, and he was trying to cut back on the amount of morphine he used. It couldn't be healthy and he had noticed that it seemed to be losing its effectiveness.

Did they make morphine you don't get addicted to? He knew that morphine was highly addictive, yet he didn't think he was addicted. Gordon considered for a couple of seconds. Perhaps he was addicted, but didn't notice because he was always being shot at so he never got to the point where he went through withdrawals. He would definitely have to talk to Dr. Kleiner about it.

Reaching an intersection, Gordon sat down and listened. Sound traveled well through the air ducts, and with luck, he should be able to hear any nearby headcrabs. He didn't hear anything that was definitely a headcrab, but he had heard an odd noise coming from the right hand branch. It was possible that noise might be a headcrab. He also heard talking. That confirmed it, if there was a headcrab that way, it would be best to get to it before it got to whoever was talking.

8. Of Screwdrivers and Morphine

****Chapter 8: Of Screwdrivers and Morphine****

Meh, really having to stretch to think of titles. Oh well. At least I have my paper HEV suit built. Gleeâ€¦|

Hah, the song "We love you, Dr. Freeman" cracks me up every time I hear it. Time to set it onto repeatâ€¦|.for inspiration, yeah.

Anyway, I have some bad news, this is the last chapter I have written up, so I have to think of stuff for the next chapter, it might be late. I'll try to have something up next Tuesday. That should give me plenty of time.

_EDIT: As of Nov 21 I still have nothing. I don't know when I will have something. Um, after Thanksgiving maybe. So, um...sorry. I won't be updating for a little while longer. I, um, found the game Phychonauts and it is currently causing me to be unable to focus on anything else. In other words, I have writer's block and my current obsession with Sasha Nein isn't helping at all... _

Alyx reached Dr. Kleiner's lab quickly. Breathlessly, she opened the door, not caring if she disturbed her father and Dr. Kleiner.

"Dad!" she yelled from the doorway, "We found a headcrab in the air ducts."

Eli Vance looked up concerned, interrupting his conversation with Isaac Kleiner. Dr. Kleiner looked over at Alyx with a puzzled expression on his face. "I don't see why that's so odd; Lamarr is always crawling through the air ducts. I think it's instinctive."

As Isaac spoke, there was movement in air duct above the two men. With a loud squeak, a small object flung itself down towards the two men below. It landed with a thump at Dr. Kleiner's feet.

"Look out!" Alyx cried.

"What? Is something after Lamarr?" Dr. Kleiner asked. He patted the top of his head, "Quick jump up, I'll protect you."

Before Alyx could protest, the small headcrab jumped up onto Dr. Kleiner's exposed head. Flinching, Alyx prepared for the worst, but to her surprise, nothing happened.

Dr. Kleiner continued speaking. "Now, what was it you were yelling about when you barged into the room?"

"Gordon found a headcrab in the vents, and it wasn't Lamarr. I was trying to warn you."

"Ah, I see. Well, it is quite fortunate that Lamarr has such distinctive coloring then."

"Distinctive?" Alyx asked in shock. "She looks like every other headcrab I've seen."

"Nonsense." Dr. Kleiner replied. "When you look at her, you can easily tell the difference. Her spots are a bit darker than most head crabs, and her skin is a more cream color while I'd say most other headcrabs are a rather beige color."

"Whatever you say, Doc." Alyx said, shaking her head. "I don't see any difference. I'm just glad you were right."

"Of course I am. It's like people, really. To the Vortigaunts we all look alike, but we can easily tell each other apart."

Eli smiled slightly. "You could also say that to us, the Vortigaunts all look alike, but to each other they are very distinctive. If Izzy says he can recognize Lamarr, I trust him. But, we should put the cover back over the air duct."

"Indeed. I wouldn't want one of those feral headcrabs to come in here and scare Lamarr," Dr. Kleiner said.

"Ok then, where is the grate that covers the opening?" Alyx asked.

Dr. Kleiner looked around the room. "Hmm, it should be around here somewhere." He wandered over to a corner, and looked under the papers

piled there. "I think I left it around here," he said.

Sighing, Alyx said, "This might take a while. It might be quicker to steal a vent from the combine."

Eli smiled. "Maybe, but let's not get carried away." He paused and looked up at the vent. "Do you hear something?" He asked.

Alyx listened. "Yeah, I do. I think it's coming from the air ducts. Hang on, let me get a chair and I'll check it out."

"Be careful," her father cautioned.

"Don't worry, I'll be fine." Alyx said as she pulled over a chair until it was aligned under the air duct opening. She climbed up onto the chair and looked in the duct, coming face to face with Gordon. Surprised, she screamed and fell backwards off the chair, landing ungracefully on the ground.

"Oww." She groaned.

Gordon pulled himself out of the vent and landed beside Alyx. He offered her his hand, which she used to pull herself up.

"Alyx, are you ok?" Eli asked.

"I'm a little sore, but I'll be fine. Jeez, Gordon, I didn't expect to see you up there."

Gordon grunted. "Barney's idea. Wanted me to check to make sure there wasn't anymore headcrabs in the ducts." He noticed Lamarr on top of Kleiner's head. He raised an eyebrow and asked, "Lamarr?"

"Yeah, she jumped out of the duct shortly before you did." Alyx replied.

Gordon said, "So, that's what I saw."

"I found it!" Dr. Kleiner exclaimed, holding the grate up in the air over his head. Lamarr squeaked triumphantly. He faced Gordon and said, "Oh, Gordon, I didn't see you come in."

Instead of answering, Gordon merely shrugged.

Alyx took the air grate from Kleiner's hands. "Thanks. I'll put this back." She removed a screwdriver from her pocket and got up on the chair to put the grate back in place.

"Isaac," Gordon said.

"Hmm, yes?"

"Should I be concerned about the morphine my suit administers?"

Isaac scowled. "I really do wish they had given it its proper name. Serum 857-9 is a type of morphine, but it really isn't accurate to call it that. I really should have changed that when I remodeled your suit."

"What does it do?"

"Well, it has the same analgesic capability to dull pain as morphine. While it still has some of the side-effects of morphine, they are mostly minor and it's much less addictive. You should be fine."

Gordon nodded. He was somewhat relieved to hear that it wasn't as addictive as true morphine. However, he was still going to cut back on his use of it. He didn't like the sound of there being side effects, even if the were as Dr. Kleiner said, mostly minor.

"There. Done," Alyx said as she stepped down off of the chair. "We should probably go find Barney."

"He's outside," Gordon said.

"Wait," Dr Kleiner said, "What about Lamarr?"

"Sorry Doc, but she should probably stay here. Most people can't tell her apart from other headcrabs. I'll make it up to you, I'll baby-sit her another time."

"Very well," Kleiner said. "Lamarr will be disappointed to learn that. She was looking forward to spending time with you. Sometimes, I just can't give her all the attention she needs." As if she understood what Dr. Kleiner was saying, Lamarr squeaked sadly.

Eli Vance put his arm over his daughter's shoulder and guided her towards the door. "Don't worry about it; you run along with Gordon. We can handle Lamarr for now."

As the door shut behind Gordon and Alyx, Alyx said, "Well, let's head outside and catch up to Barney."

End
file.